UNITED
NATIONS

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General Assembly

Distr.
LIMITED

A/C.2/51/L.48
27 November 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fifty-first session
SECOND COMMITTEE
Agenda items 97 (a) and 116

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997

Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa

Programme budget implications of the draft resolution contained in document A/C.2/51/L.39

Statement submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly

A. Requests contained in the draft resolution

1. By operative paragraph 3 of draft resolution A/C.2/51/L.39, the General Assembly would recall the decision contained in paragraph 4 of its resolution 50/112 and, in that context, take note of paragraph 3 of decision 9/5 of 13 September 1996 of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa.

2. By operative paragraph 4 of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would decide that the first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention should be held from 29 September to 10 October 1997.

3. By operative paragraph 5 of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would accept with deep appreciation the generous offer of the Government of Italy to host in Rome, at the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture

Organization of the United Nations, the first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention.

4. By operative paragraph 6 of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would decide to include the first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and the meetings of its subsidiary bodies in the calendar of conferences and meetings for 1997-1998.

5. By operative paragraph 13 of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would request the Secretary-General, subject to the decision of the Conference of the Parties at its first session, to consider:

(a) Authorizing the secretariat established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 47/188, to act as secretariat for the transition period following the first session of the Conference of the Parties until the permanent secretariat designated by the Conference of the Parties began operating, which should not be later than 31 December 1998;

(b) Maintaining the arrangements within the current programme budget for the interim secretariat to support the Convention beyond the first session of the Conference of the Parties until the permanent secretariat designated by the Conference of the Parties began operating, which should not be later than 31 December 1998, and maintaining the arrangements relating to extrabudgetary funds.

B. Implementation of the requests

6. With regard to operative paragraph 3 of the draft resolution, and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/112, the tenth and a further session of up to two weeks' duration of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee are included in the approved calendar of conferences and meetings for the biennium 1996-1997.

7. With regard to operative paragraphs 4 to 6, it is recalled that, as indicated in document A/C.5/51/22, the meetings of the first session of the Conference of the Parties can be accommodated in the calendar of conferences and meetings for 1997. In addition, it is understood that the first session of the Conference of the Parties will be held in Rome in accordance with section I, paragraph 5, of Assembly resolution 40/243. However, pending a decision by the Conference of the Parties at its first session, the meetings of its subsidiary bodies may not be included in the calendar for 1998. Once the Conference of the Parties has made its recommendation on its programme of meetings for 1998, the conference-servicing requirements of these recommendations will be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session for approval.

8. With regard to operative paragraph 13, the first session of the Conference of the Parties will take place from 29 September to 10 October 1997; on the assumption that the Conference would request the General Assembly to authorize the Secretary-General to maintain the current budgetary and administrative arrangements regarding the secretariat of the Convention for 1998, the requirements for financing the activities of that secretariat in 1998 will be dealt with in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999.